



**US Army Corps  
of Engineers**  
Pittsburgh District

# News Release

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Pittsburgh District Be a Survivor – Wear Your Life Jacket!**

PITTSBURGH – During National Safe Boating Week, May 17 - 23, 2008, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is encouraging all Americans to take basic safety precautions such as wearing a life jacket, participating in a boating safety course, getting a free vessel check and never boating under the influence of alcohol or drugs. By practicing responsible boating habits and avoiding risky behaviors including careless and reckless operation, inattention and excessive speed, boaters can contribute to a safer, more pleasurable experience while enjoying the outdoors.

Nationwide there are approximately 5,000 boating accidents, 3,500 injuries and 700 fatalities, including 500 drownings, each year. Drowning is the Nation's second leading cause of accidental death, yet it is possible – just by wearing a life jacket – to reduce drowning deaths. Statistics show that 90 percent of those who drown at U.S. Army Corps of Engineers lakes may have survived if they had worn a life jacket. Boating safety experts want to get something off their chest and onto yours: a life jacket. Following are safety tips from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to help recreation seekers keep safe in water-based activities over the Memorial Day holiday weekend and throughout the summer.

For your safety, the Pittsburgh District encourages everyone to observe the rules and regulations at Corps [navigation locks and dams](#) and flood control projects including [Berlin Lake](#), [Conemaugh Lake](#), [Crooked Creek Lake](#), [East Branch Clarion River Lake](#), [Kinzua Dam/Allegheny Reservoir](#), [Loyalhanna Lake](#), [Mahoning Creek Lake](#), [Michael J. Kirwan Dam](#), [Mosquito Lake](#), [Shenango Lake](#), [Stonewall Jackson Lake](#), [Tionesta Lake](#), [Tygart Lake](#), [Woodcock Creek Lake](#) and [Youghiogheny River Lake](#).

### **Alcohol and water don't mix**

More than half of all drowning fatalities involve alcohol. Just one beer can impair balance, vision, judgment and reaction time. Research shows that four hours of boating – exposure to noise, vibration, sun, glare and wind – produces fatigue that simulates drunkenness. Boating fatigue combined with alcohol consumption intensifies the effects and increases accident risk. So remember, if fun is planned in, on or near the water, don't drink alcohol.

### **Boaters!**

- ❖ Know your boat and know the rules of the road. Take a safe boating course. Visit [www.cgaux.org](http://www.cgaux.org) and [www.usps.org](http://www.usps.org) for information on boating classes and water safety training.
- ❖ View the U.S. Coast Guard federal regulations governing boating at [www.uscgboating.org](http://www.uscgboating.org) and know your state laws.
- ❖ Check your boat for all required safety equipment. Visit [www.cgaux.org](http://www.cgaux.org).
- ❖ Carry a set of [navigation charts](#) on board.

- ❖ Don't overload the boat (consider boat size, the number passengers and extra equipment before loading).
- ❖ Follow manufacturer's suggested procedures before starting the engine.
- ❖ Wear a life jacket (Personal Flotation Device, PFD) – don't just carry one on board. Make sure it is U.S. Coast Guard approved and appropriately sized.
- ❖ Check the weather forecast.
- ❖ File a float plan with family or friends who are not on the vessel.

**U.S. Coast Guard approved Personal Flotation Devices must be carried on board all boats operating on Corps of Engineers lakes and must be worn by all people on board all boats in accordance with the following:**

- **All people onboard all boats less than 16 feet in length, all canoes and kayaks**
- **All children on all boats twelve years of age and under in Pennsylvania, New York, Ohio and West Virginia.**
- **All non-swimmers.**

A Life Jacket Loaner Program is available at Kinzua Dam/Allegheny Reservoir, Shenango Lake, Stonewall Jackson Lake, Tionesta Lake and Tygart Lake. Loaner life jackets are available to any adult or child should you forget to bring one.

As annual boating fatalities have decreased, the percentage due to not wearing life jackets has risen. Ninety percent of those who drowned in 2006 were not wearing a life jacket! Skydivers use parachutes, football players take the field with helmets and responsible drivers buckle up. Boaters can stay safe on our nation's waters by adopting the same "second nature" approach to wearing a life jacket. "It's too hot!" "It doesn't look cool!" "I know how to swim!" These are just a few of the many reasons people use for not wearing a life jacket. But with nearly 500 people drowning each year from recreational boating accidents, it's imperative to wear a life jacket at all times while on the water. Life jackets are no longer the orange, hot and bulky vests that are commonly associated with water safety gear. New innovations and developments in life jackets have produced smaller, sleeker and much more comfortable versions, leaving no reason not to WEAR IT!

### **Swimmers! LEARN TO SWIM...LEARN TO SWIM WELL!**

- ❖ Watch your children at all times when around the water.
- ❖ Never dive into lakes and rivers...the results can be tragic.
- ❖ Never rely on toys such as inner tubes and water wings to stay afloat.
- ❖ Don't take chances by over-estimating your swimming skills.
- ❖ Reach or throw a flotation device to help someone in trouble. Don't go in the water!
- ❖ Swim only in designated swimming areas.
- ❖ Never swim alone.



**Please make your visit to any recreation area a safe and enjoyable one. Taking water safety precautions saves lives.**

For more tips on how to be water safe, visit the Corps' water safety web site at <http://watersafety.usace.army.mil>. Freddie the Fish, the water safety mascot for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Pittsburgh District, delivers his water safety message in a coloring book available at [www.lrp.usace.army.mil/kids/kids.htm](http://www.lrp.usace.army.mil/kids/kids.htm).